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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DEMANDS BETTER TRACKING OF FOSTER FAMILY AGENCIES

Demanding more accountability for the care of children under the supervision of foster family agencies, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors called for a plan to more closely regulate and investigate their financial practices and establish significant consequences for agencies with serious lapses.

Acting on a motion authored by Chairman Mark Ridley-Thomas and amended by Supervisor Gloria Molina, the move to improve oversight of the agencies stems from a long-standing concern about county audits that have found repeated examples of misappropriation of funds, financial mismanagement and potential illegal use of public funds by some foster family agencies and group homes. Past audits found that some agencies used county money to purchase items such as cars or to fund vacations.

“Agency employees using county money for their own personal use instead of helping our foster children is unacceptable,” said Chairman Ridley-Thomas. “There should be

stronger consequences than simply a repayment plan.”

The Department of Children and Family Services directly oversees the safety and welfare of children who have been abused or neglected and who are under jurisdiction of the court. These children are sometimes placed with foster family agencies or group homes when they cannot remain in their family’s care or be placed with a relative.

The motion expects DCFS to outline how annual audits will be performed and, if the audits have not been performed in the past five years, explain why. Also, DCFS must outline how much money is allocated to the auditor- controller for these audits, how many will be conducted annually and whether that amount should be increased.

Alarminglly, the county continues to do business with foster family agencies and group homes that do not adequately care for dependent children and so county attorneys have been asked to clarify language making it easier to end a contract with an agency not fulfilling its obligations.

Hoping to establish better collaboration and communication, the motion also requires DCFS and the auditor-controller to explain why they have not collaborated to produce a comprehensive audit report.

The departments will present their report to the supervisors within 30 days.

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